FFG ACADEMY FACTSHEET:
HORIZON EUROPE CALLS 2025

IMPORTANT CHANGES IN PROPOSAL TEMPLATES AND EVALUATION PROCESS

> To simplify the application process for the Horizon Europe calls for proposals 2025, there are new features in the Standard Applications forms (=proposal templates) in all 3 Horizon Europe pillars - here is an overview of the most important changes. You can find all current templates on the **Funding & Tenders Portal**.
>
> **Tipp:** A large number of applicants use old templates. Please make sure to use the last updated template by downloading it directly from the submission page in the funding and tender portal for each call.
>
> **General reminder:** since 2023 there is a box on "Guidance on the use of generative AI tools for the preparation of the proposal" in Part B – technical description.

1. **RIAs/IAs/CSAs (Research and Innovation Actions/Innovation Actions/Coordination and Support Actions) - latest changes:**

General:

Changes to the gender balance criterion: The criterion for prioritizing proposals with a gender balance of project staff, which is applied in the event of proposals with the same score, has been adjusted in the "General Annexes" and now only applies to **researchers with a leading role** listed in the table "Researchers involved in the project" in Part A.

Chapter 1 – Excellence (same changes in full proposals and 1st stage proposal)

- The "Do No Significant Harm" (DNSH) principle has been removed from the proposal templates and evaluation forms. Aspects relating to DNSH now only need to be taken into account if they are explicitly required in the call text/conditions.
- The section on AI robustness has been removed. In the "Ethics Self-Assessment" in Part A, it is still required to address ethical concerns related to human rights and values of AI based systems.
- The section on research data management has been partly removed and simplified. There is only a reference left that a detailed Data Management Plan (DMP) will need to be developed by proposals selected for funding, and planned as a deliverable by month 6.
- The Evaluation forms have been changed accordingly (removed references to Do No Significant Harm principle and AI robustness)

Other relevant info:
- Depending on whether a call participates in the Blind evaluation pilot, make sure to use the right template (different templates for 1st stage proposal under Blind evaluation or "normal" evaluation)

2. Pathfinder Open Call - latest changes:

Chapter 1 - Excellence
- The award criterion "Long-term vision" was added: *How convincing is the vision of a radically new technology and relevant potential solutions, towards which the project would contribute in the long term?*

Chapter 3 – Quality and efficiency of the implementation
- The award criterion "Quality of the consortium" was added: *To what extent do all the consortium members have the necessary capacity and high-quality expertise for performing the project tasks?*

3. EIC Pathfinder Challenges Call - latest changes:

General:
- New four topics and challenge guides were published.
- The final application template will be published in Funding and Tenders Portal on 24rd of July (tbc).

Chapter 2 - Impact
- The following sentence was added to the award criterion "Innovation potential": *How realistic is the proof of principle for demonstrating the potential impact of the technology for the challenge?*

Other relevant info:
- It is highly recommended to carefully read the respective EIC Pathfinder challenge guide that is published on the EIC website and the Funding & Tenders Portal.

4. EIC Transition Call - latest changes:

General:
- Seal of Excellence will be awarded to all proposals that meet the evaluation thresholds but are not funded due to lack of available budget (previously only for mono-beneficiary SME proposals). If the proposal is submitted by consortia, the Seal of Excellence will be awarded to the coordinator of the proposal, listing the other participating legal entities. The cover page was modified accordingly.
- Project results coming from Joint Undertakings (JU) are now eligible unless they come from FSTP grants. Innovation (IA), Coordination and support Actions (CSA) remain not eligible (except ERC PoC, ILPs). Grants funded via cascade mechanisms (e.g., ERA Nets and FSTP, co-funded partnerships, EIT KICs, etc.) are not eligible. On the cover page, a table was added to list all the linked projects relevant to the proposal.

Chapter 1 – Excellence
- Some instructions were added to be more specific and "on the point".

Chapter 2 – Impact
- Some instructions were added regarding the validation of the business solution.
- In "2.3 Investment readiness", the following instruction was added: *If you plan to rise private capital during or shortly after the project end, please mention any concrete activities you plan to execute together with any preparation (if) needed for a successful outcome.*

Chapter 3 – Implementation
- The table "Patent families" was added to list all granted patents or ongoing patent applications.
- In "3.1 Quality and motivation of the team", the request to describe, if applicable, the team of the main exploitation partner (CEO, CSO, CFO, team members with unique expertise) was added.
- In "3.2 KPIs, milestone and risks", some explanation was added

Other relevant info:
- In case of high personnel costs, especially personnel costs above the values shown in this dashboard, please justify them in the comment tab of the detailed lump sum budget table.

5. EIC Accelerator Open and Challenges Call - latest changes:

General:
- The maximum investment component is reduced from EUR 15 million to EUR 10 million.
- For proposals submitted through the Open and Challenges Calls, unanimous approval in case of consensus meetings is required for a jury interview invitation.
- No longer need for a previous grant for the equity only form of support.
- Clarifications that proposals with nuclear applications are eligible in the case of the EIC Accelerator.

Chapter 1 - Excellence
- The sub-criterion "Excellence of the company" was removed.
- Minimum Technology Readiness Level (TRL) was increased to 6 and the corresponding criterion "Technology readiness level" was adapted
- More focus on deep tech was added in the criterion "Novelty and breakthrough nature of the innovation".

Chapter 2 - Impact
- At full proposal stage, the criterion "Risk level of the investment" was rephrased to assess whether the company will be able to attract, with the support of the EIC, the remaining funding from other investors within the next two years.

Annexes
- Ownership Control Declaration added: For applications to challenge 3 (GenAI4EU: Creating European Champions in Generative AI) and challenge 4 (Innovative in-space servicing, operations, robotics and technologies for resilient EU space infrastructure), as well as for open applications falling within the scope of the above mentioned challenges.

6. MSCA Calls – latest changes

There are several instruments in MSCA, some with more detailed changes, some with minor changes. Here are the most important updates:

Doctoral networks
- Removed references to AI robustness
- Several changes and explanations added in latest Version of April 2025

Postdoctoral fellowships

- Removed references to AI robustness and simplification of requirements of data management plan
- Clarification regarding checks of compliance to formatting conditions during the evaluation
- Corrected links in the Open Science section 1.2

7. Glimpse into the future: Changes to the ERC grant application forms as of ERC Work Programme 2026

Grant application

- The overall structure of the application form for the ERC calls will remain the same; however, applicants will be asked to structure their project proposal as follows:
  - Part I of the Scientific Proposal (formerly, the Extended Synopsis) should describe the overall idea of the proposed research project, including the current state of knowledge and how the research will contribute to the field, the scientific questions the project will attempt to answer, the objectives of the project, and the overall approach or research strategy to achieve those objectives. As in the past, the length of this section will be limited to five pages.
  - Part II of the Scientific Proposal should describe the implementation in detail: the research methodology, work plan, risk assessment and mitigating measures, justification for the requested budget and resources, and any further necessary background not included in Part I. The length of this section will now be limited to seven pages for Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant applications and ten pages for Synergy Grant applications. This page limit does not apply to the justification of the requested budget and resources. For Synergy Grant applications, this section should also explain the collaborative arrangements enabling the Synergy Grant group to carry out the project.

Evaluation

- Part I of the Scientific Proposal along with the applicant's CV and Track Record (i.e. Part B1 of the application form) will be assessed at Step 1, whereas both parts of the Scientific Proposal, the CV and Track Record, as well as the Resources and Time Commitment will be assessed at Step 2 of the evaluation. First and foremost, applicants will be assessed on the ambition of their idea in advancing present-day knowledge in the field based on Part I of the Scientific Proposal. Only those who have presented a convincing proposal at Step 1 will advance to the next stage of the evaluation, during which the methodology and implementation (including feasibility) of the proposed research and the resource allocation will be assessed jointly with the information already reviewed at Step 1.
- Feasibility will no longer be assessed at Step 1; thus, Part I of the Scientific Proposal should no longer include details on the feasibility of the scientific approach but present a convincing overall research strategy. All aspects relating to feasibility should be covered in Part II of the Scientific Proposal.